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Senate passes Sen. Stamas' resolution addressing cormorant population problem

LANSING – A Senate resolution calling for more aggressive control of the double-crested cormorant, one of the state's most significant threats to wildlife, was approved unanimously today by the Senate, said Sen. Tony Stamas, R-Midland.

The bird's increasing population has had adverse effects on the numbers of recreational and commercial fish.

"The double-crested cormorant is having a devastating impact on ecosystems all around the country," Stamas said. "In order to truly help control the population of this bird, we need to work together with other states."

Senate Resolution 103, sponsored by Stamas, urges the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to work with the federal government and neighboring Great Lakes states to implement an aggressive program to control the double-crested cormorant.

Twenty-three other states have approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to carry out cormorant control programs. Michigan cormorants migrate each winter to southeastern states and the Gulf of Mexico.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services has been conducting pilot projects in the Les Cheneaux Islands, Brevoort Lake and Drummond Island.

The DNR expects results of the initial control programs to become available this spring. Stamas' resolution urges completion of the pilot project so that data obtained can be used to set goals, coordinate control and assess the progress of the control efforts.

Currently, there is a growing population of the bird in the Ludington area along Lake Michigan. The Little Manistee, Manistee and Pere Marquette rivers all feed into the lake in that area and provide some of the best steelhead, salmon and walleye spawning rivers in northern Michigan.

The birds also have established a nesting ground on the Consumers Energy Ludington Pump Storage Facility break wall, causing environmental damage and depleting the local fish population.

The double-crested cormorant can go underwater for food. It feeds on small fish and can consume up to a pound and a half of fish a day, typically eating small steelhead, salmon and walleye.